Ibn Taymeeyah's Letters from Prison

Introduction

All praises are due to Allaah. We praise Him, seek His help, and ask for (His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allaah from the evil in our souls and from our sinful deeds. W'hoever Allaah guides, no one can misguide. And whoever Allaah misguides, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no one worthy of worship except Allaah. And I bear witness that Muhammad (SAAS) is His servant and messenger.

In their search for worthy examples, people tend to look to the past, hoping to resurrect the legacy of those great and honourable men who contributed greatly to the Ummah through their knowledge, wisdom, and courage. It is said that the people agonise when they find no one of significance to look up to. Fortuitously, society does not solely consist of the living, but also the dead. The greatest of the dead are still alive amongst us.

One of those unique men in lslaamic heritage was the dignified Scholar and valiant Mujaahid: Ahmad bin 'Abdul-Haleem bin Taymeeyah. He was one of the most eloquent and truthful men in analysing the lslaamic mentality and methodology. Yet when we return to the lslaamic heritage, we should not be solely and sentimentally attached to the past, without it materializing and forming the basis and drive for our present and future. This is what we hope to achieve in this book.

Much of the heritage of Shaykh ul-lslaam IbnTaymeeyah has been published; yet it is still worth appreciating the age in which he lived and some of the features that it enjoyed, and crucially, the reasons behind the sending of the letters that are the subject of this book. The letters are predominantly extracted from two books: *Majmoo' ul-Fatawa,* and *al-'Uqood ud-Durreeyah,* and, except the letter to the Christian king, are from his time in prison.

Ibn Taymeeyah was born on 10th Rabi al-Awwal 661 AH (1263 CE) in the town of Harran in the province of Jazeerah [1]. He was a descendent *of* a very well known and established family, characterized by excellent memories and beauty of expression. His father, the Shaykh 'Abdul-Haleem was a scholar of hadeeth, and his grandfather was Majdudeen Abul-Barakat, the author

[1] Situated north of Syria and Iraq today.

of *Muntaqa al-Akhbar* [2]. Says the grandson, "Our grandfather was phenomenal in memorizing hadeeth, narrating them and in knowing people's schools of thought."

lbn Taymeeyah was born in an age of great cultural and political upheaval. It was only five years prior to his birth that Baghdad was ravaged and mercilessly destroyed by the Tatars, and his family had to flee to Damascus when he was young. The savagery of those invaders had undoubtedly given the boy a deep hatred of oppression, and further instilled in him courage to fight the enemy.

The age of lbn Taymeeyah was also characterized by the rise of many disciplines. The underlying themes of these sciences, were their depth, breadth, and their authors' attempts to fuse the rising sciences together. Indeed, many of the books resembled encyclopaedias. lbn Taymeeyah had benefited from such an environment, but at the same time he did not content himself to that which he was taught. Instead, he was diligent in learning but maintained an independence of thought. This meant that he was not restricted to one teacher or school of thought, and thereby he gained from all, and produced novel ideas. This search for knowledge led him to be familiar with many of his age's cultures and creeds. He wrote extensively on beliefs, explaining the true one and rebuking those who disagreed; but tafseer (explanation of the Qur'aan) remained the subject that always captivated him. "I might read a hundred interpretations of one verse, but would still ask Allaah's guidance in its comprehension saying, 'Oh teacher of Aadam and lbraaheem teach me!' I would also go to the deserted masjids and ask Allah, 'Oh teacher of lbraaheem! Make me comprehend.'" His contemporaries were quick to recognise his merit, as al-Qadi az-Zamalkaanee gave a true description, "Just as Allaah had made iron soft for Daawood, He made sciences supple for Ibn Taymeeyah's grasp."

Why was Ibn Taymeeyah such a distinguished figure, one might ask. Firstly, there was his constant and unbroken bond with the masses of Muslims, for he was their teacher and mentor, he would resolve their problems and defend their rights in the face of the rulers. He would try to keep them steadfast when their enemies attacked, he would enjoin the good and forbid the evil, and most especially, he was not diverted by mundane worldly matters. Therefore, the whole of his time was devoted to attaining knowledge and participating in jihads. Indeed, it was this strong connection that made the general masses of Damascus love, respect and honour him. Even the most jealous of his enemies were not able to harm him there, but instead they had their chance in Egypt where he was not as well known.

These sincere feelings for the affairs of Muslims can be sensed when Shaykh ul-lslaam spoke regarding politics, "Civilisation is rooted in justice, and the consequences of oppression are devastating. Therefore, it is said that Allaah aids the just state even if it is non-Muslim, yet withholds His help from the oppressive state even if it is Muslim." He also said,"There are sincere Muslims who perceive that commanding a high post [3] inevitably leads to love of rule and wealth. Some common Muslims regard the acceptor of such responsibility, as a turning away from the 'religion of mercy and humbleness'. However, the correct attitude is that the appointment of the virtuous serves the Ummah far better than assigning posts to the wicked." His

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[2] A famous book that Imaam ash-shawkaanee explained in his Nayl ul-Awtaar.

[3] E.g. a judge, a minister, or an administrator.

concern was also with the public in economic problems, attacking those who establish monopolies over foodstuffs, "In times of need, the ruler can force people to sell their goods at their original value!"

As the Tatars were approaching Damascus, fear gripped the population and some thought of fleeing. Yet Ibn Taymeeyah rejected such defeatist ideas and instead, he appealed for the people not to depart and to be steadfast. He would say in encouragement to the generals of the army, "Allaah will grant us victory!" and they would respond by asking him to say, "Insh'Allaah," but he would reply, "I say it in certainty and not in mere hope!" Indeed, he participated in the jihaad against the Tatars in the battle of Shaqhab after announcing his famous Fatwa declaring the Tatars kaffir, due to their insistence upon the abandonment of some of the rites of Islaam, even though they pronounced the Shahaadah.

When one of the scholars was imprisoned, and the news reached Ibn Taymeeyah, he personally went and managed the scholar's release, after praising and vindicating him in front of the ruler of Damascus. In another instance, he heard of a man who blasphemed against the Prophet (salallaahu alayhi wa salam), so he stood to forbid the evil, and with the masses supporting him, he wrote the famous book, *as-Sarim al-Maslool 'ala Shatem ar-Rasool* [4]. Furthermore, his deep concern for the Muslims, and his intimate knowledge of their affairs in every country, their conditions, and their nearness or distance to Islaam stands out. This is illustrated in his description of the Muslims in the lands of Sham [5] and Egypt who, were standing firm at his time, defending their lands. "

lf one is to review the affairs of the world, one would inevitably realise that this group in ash-sham and Egypt are the most staunch group upholding the Deen in knowledge, action and jihads. They are relieving the Muslims throughout the world of their obligation of jihaad as they struggle against the hardened disbelievers. The prestige of all Muslims is derived from that group's glory. . .

"For the inhabitants of Yemen are weak, and unable or unwilling to carry out jihads, subservient to their rulers,

"The Hijaazi peoples are swamped in the depths of innovations and misguidance, and their people of knowledge and faith are weak and subdued. lf that group in ash-Sham and Egypt were to be subjugated - and l seek refuge in Allah from that- then those from Hijaaz would be rendered the most degraded of Allaah's servants.

"The lands of Africa [6] are led by its Bedouins and they are very wicked, and themselves deserving to be conquered by jihaad. Further on, the lands of the Maghreb are all but occupied by the Europeans, yet Muslims there do not attempt their jihads. Had Tatars occupied those regions, they would have encountered timid people. . .

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4 Meaning, "The Drawn Sword on the Blasphemer of the Prophet."

5 The lands of ash-Sham refer to the areas that were historically under the administrational Damascus, Syria, They include today's Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.

6 The term 'lands of Africa' refers to today's Libya, Tunisia and Algeria.

"Therefore, it is clear that it is that group situated in ash-Sham and Egypt who are the vanguard of Islam, their success is an honour for Islaam, and their defeat is a calamity for it."

This lengthy quote is included for its importance and to demonstrate lbn Taymeeyah's up-to-date insight into the affairs of his time, and mistreat ability to interpret the social and psychological condition of the people. Secondly, next to the Shaykh's connection with the masses and knowledge of current affairs, he also possessed a depth of understanding and a high level of alertness. He noticed that, from the end of the second century AH, there existed of a group of Muslims who were fascinated by the philosophies of Plato and the logic of Aristotle [7]. That group tried to instil the theories of the philosophers into the pure creed, thereby disfiguring it, so that beneficial knowledge was turned into sterile debate and idle discussion. The abstract theories had never been able to grant felicity to mankind, which was always granted in the light of Prophethood. Truly, here is an Imaam uninfected by an inferiority complex that diseased some scholars, past and present.

Thirdly, the letters, which were selected for this book, are another side of Ibn Taymeeyah. A side many people do not know of. Usually, it is his uncompromising stances and truthful, sometimes harsh retorts that are often remembered. However, there is a side of his character that writes a letter to his mother full of concern, leniency and respect. Other letters are for his brothers and students in Damascus, and are characterized by love and advice. He also shows forgiveness towards those who worked to imprison him. Another is a letter full of wisdom, eloquence and firmness to a Christian king. This is the side of his character unknown to many - that of Ibn Taymeeyah, the benevolent man with a heart full of eemaan and mercy.

These letters were predominantly written in prison. But why was such a Shaykh imprisoned? He was neither imprisoned by a non-Muslim state nor by an oppressive ruler. Unfortunately, his gaoling was conspired by some of the envious Shaykhs of his time, "due to his individual distinction in enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, for people's genuine love and adherence to him, and to the large number of his followers."[8] This is along with their asabeeyah [9] to what they themselves wrote in Fiqh or Beliefs, and although some did it with a good intention, they nevertheless all conspired to provoke the ruler against Ibn Taymeeyah, and as a result he was imprisoned in Cairo, Alexandria and Damascus.

Herein lies a serious problem. How can a scholar be imprisoned as a result of an ijtihaad, by which he differed from other scholars yet never transgressed beyond the boundaries of ijtihaad, and certainly not outside of Islaam? How is it that we cannot accommodate another opinion by a scholar noted for his love for Allaah and His Messenger? One says this not to solely dig into the past, but because currently, there are similar incidents and this is indeed a very pitiful state. Our hearts should be big enough to encompass disagreements as long as they are not in the areas of innovation, deviation or legislation contradicting Allaah's command. We should not resort to replies and retorts, which show false piety and bravery, or to using titles to give the mistaken

7 Just as some are captivated by the discourse of the Orientalists today.

8 Ibn Katheer, al-Bidaya wan-Nihaya, vol. 14, pg.37.

9 Meaning unjustified blind following of a certain idea, party or place, belittling and rebuking those who are different. It does not mean mere following.

impression of a battle being waged against an enemy, as if with swords and not with the words that are being used.

We return to Shaykh ul-Islaam in prison. The story began when he wrote a treatise entitled *al-Hamaweeyab* in reply to a question from the town of Hama regarding Allaah's Attributes in 698 AH. He was asked to explain the treatise in Damascus in a few public gatherings. There, he informed the Deputy Sultan that what was in the treatise was not novel, but had been written in his own book '*Aqeedah al-Wassiteeyah* a few years earlier, and that both books included the beliefs of Ahlus-Sunnah. None could debate or doubt his strong and evidence-based works. The Deputy tried to resolve the objections of other scholars, by announcing that Ibn Taymeeyah's works were following the tradition of Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal. Ibn Taymeeyah rejected this appeasing attitude, and replied that it was the 'Aqeedah of the predecessors, and was not exclusive to Imaam Ahmad.

The Shaykhs of Egypt succeeded where their counterparts in Damascus failed. This was due to his credibility and trustworthiness in the second capital Damascus, and his anonymity in the first (Cairo, Egypt). The Shaykhs in Cairo had managed to incite the oppressive ruler, Ruknudeen Baybars the Jashangir whose personal shaykh and mentor, was a fanatical Soofee named Nasr al-Manbaji [10]. As a result, a sultanate order was issued to bring Ibn Taymeeyah to Cairo for interrogation in 705 AH. Against the advice of the Deputy Sultan in Damascus, Shaykh ul-Islaam decided to go to Egypt as he saw much benefit in being there. On his day of departure, says his student Ibn 'Abdul-Haadi, "People gathered to bid their farewells, overwhelmed by grief and surprise. . . many weeping." [11]

When Shaykh ul-Islaam arrived in Egypt, a tribunal chaired by the judge Ibn Makhloof al-Maaliki was arranged. However, the Shaykh felt that his arbiter was also his opponent, and thus refused to answer questions. As a result, he was imprisoned in the Mount's Castle in Cairo with his brothers 'Adullaah and 'Abdur-Rahman. In the meantime, he sent a letter to one of his relatives wherein he mentions that he refused the gift of the Sultanate, not wanting to be defiled in anyway.

Eighteen months passed before Ibn Taymeeyah was released unconditionally after the intervention of an Arab Prince named Husamudeen bin 'Eesaa in 707 AH. There were earlier initiatives that failed, due to Ibn Taymeeyah's captors attempting to attach conditions that were unacceptable to him. After his release, Ibn Taymeeyah stayed in Cairo where he established classes and circles of knowledge in masjids, to benefit the people thereby. Yet those who harboured rotten ideas, feared the light of guidance emanating from the presence of the Shaykh amongst them. After the Sultan received their complaints, he decided to expel Shaykh ul-Islaam back to Syria, but with conditions, which he later accepted at the insistence of his followers. As

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[10] The Sultan then was Muhammad bin Qalawoon, but as he increasingly sensed that the strong man was the Jashangir and not himself, he left to perform Hajj and then settled in Karak (Jordan), in a face-saving exercise, but he returned later.

[11] Al-'Uqood ud-Durreeyah, pg. 249.

he was embarking upon his trip, an orderers issued to re-imprison him [12]. One must relay the magnificent scene witnessed when Shaykh ul-Islaam was re-jailed,

"When he entered prison, he saw the prisoners busy with all kinds of time-wasting games for entertainment, such as chess and dice games, leading to loss of prayer. The Shaykh rebuked them strongly, and commanded them to keep the prayers, and turn towards Allaah in worship, repentance and good deeds. He taught them from the Sunnah what they needed to know, encouraging them to do good, and bolstering their faith, and thereby rendered the prison a haven for seekers of the knowledge of religion. Such a place became better than schools and circles. Some of the released prisoners preferred staying with him rather than being free; and those frequenting his company increased to a point where the prison became full of them!" [13]

This state of affairs did not please the envious, and so he was sent to a prison in Alexandria. Soon afterwards, the self-exiled Sultan Muhammad bin Qalawoon, who had a great deal of respect for the Shaykh returned in triumph. The Sultan asked for Ibn Taymeeyah to be returned to Cairo. When he came to the Sultanate court, it was full of princes and scholars. The Sultan stood up for the Shaykh greeting him warmly, and then took him to a distant corner and asked, "There are amongst those scholars present here, those whose oath was given to the Jashangir (Qalawoon's former rival), and had slandered you." He then asked for his opinion (fatwa) to exterminate them. The Shaykh strongly objected and replied, "If they were to go, none of the same calibre could then be found in your country. As for what they have done to me, and my right to extract a punishment, I forgive them, and they are free." [14] And thus the coming of Shaykh ul-Islaam to Cairo was sealed, where he resided near al-Hussayn Masjid, with his ever-present commitment to the spreading of knowledge, and courageous enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

In 712 AH, Ibn Taymeeyah returned to Damascus after an absence of seven years and few days. The Egyptian Army that had been dispatched to block the attack of the Tatars accompanied him. He later resettled in Damascus returning to publicise the knowledge of the religion. Yet again, his opponents would not leave him as he gave a fatwa that contradicted their opinions. This was coupled with what they had found in his book *Iqtida 'as-Siraat ul-Mustaqim* in the form of a chapter on 'Travelling in order to visit graves' and its unlawfulness according to the texts. By this time, the envious scholars had managed to change the mind of the hitherto sympathetic Sultan, who in turn ordered Ibn Taymeeyah's arrest to the Castle in Damascus. Shaykh ul-lslaam was uttering the verse whilst entering his cell:

"And thereupon a wall will be raised between them, with a gate in it. Within it will be grace and mercy, and the outside thereof suffering." Al-Qur'aan 57:13

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[12] As Allaah says, the Exalted in Might, about the people of Egypt regardingYoosuf: "Even after they had seen all the signs (of Yoosuf's innocence) that they might as well imprison him for a time." It is also striking how the Shaykh stayed for seven years in Egypt, akin to the seven fertile years that Yoosuf (alayhis salam had told the good tidings of).

[13] Al-'Uqood ud-Durreeyah, pg. 269.

[14] Ibid. pg. 282

In prison he continued to write, working on tafseer, reciting the Qur'aan, and worshipping his Lord. He was later refused access to ink, paper and books, and soon after that, the enlightened heart stopped, and the pure soul passed to the grace of its Lord in the confines of prison in 728 AH. May Allaah have mercy on him, please him and be pleased with him. Thus was the story of the reformer and revivalist Imaam. The example of knowledge, jihaad and chivalry...of one who forgave his opponents save those enemies of Allaah and His Messenger.

Letter One**The letter of Shaykh ul-Islaam Ibn Taymeeyah to his mother,**

in which he apologises for his stay in Egypt. A stay he felt was necessary to educate the people.

In the name of Allaah, Most Merciful, Dispenser of Mercy

From Ahmad bin Taymeeyah to my dear and honourable Mother, may Allaah bless her amply, and grant her peace and comfort, and make her amongst the best of His servants, Assalamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakatuh.

We praise Allaah, the most worthy of praise. There is no deity worthy of worship but He, and He has Power over all things. We ask Him to bless the Seal of the Prophets and Imaam of the pious, Muhammad His servant and Messenger (salallaahu alayhi wa salam).

Indeed the bounties of Allaah come abundantly, and His aid is never ending. We praise Him for it, and ask Him to increase His favour. It will not escape you, my contented mother, the fact that our stay in Egypt is for an important issue. The abandonment of such a task leads to the corruption of our Deen and of our life.

Yet it was not our choice to be far from you. Had birds been able to carry us, we would have come to you. But the absent one has his reason; and had you been able to look deeply into the affairs of the Muslims, you would not choose for me another place to the one I am in now. Nevertheless, I had never intended to reside here permanently. Instead, I pray to Allaah to guide you and I to the right choice, and I pray for your well-being. I ask Allaah to bless us and the rest of the Muslims, with His goodness and what that goodness encompasses of safety and benefit.

Allaah had opened for me His gates of blessings, mercy and guidance in a way I have never conceived of before. Yet I am always considering travel towards you, making the prayers of Istikhaarah. It is inconceivable for me, if given the choice, to favour any of this life's mundane issues or of the lesser obligations of the Deen, to being close to you. Yet there are great issues which l cannot abandon for fear of their general and personal dangers [15] - and the witness sees what the absent does not.

I beseech you to supplicate to Allaah profusely. Ask Him to guide us to choose our best paths, for He Knows and we do not, and He is able and we are weak. The Messenger of Allaah (salallaahu alayhi wa salam) said:

[15] Shaykh Muhammad Aboo Zahrah comments on his book *Ibn Taymeeyah:* the general danger is the corruption of people. The personal one is that as a Scholar, he has to fulfil his obligation of guiding the people to the right way. There is also another danger which, is that Ibn Taymeeyah came to Egypt whilst accused in his belief, and that he has a right to defend and vindicate himself.

It is from the happiness of the son of Aadam to practice lstikhaarah and be pleased wîth what Allaah had ordained for him. And it is from the misery of the son of Aadam to drop tbe Istikhaarah of Allaah and be displeased at Allaah's decrees. [16]

Indeed, the travelling trader might fear the loss of his money, so he resides at a place until he is able to travel once again. The matter that we are in the middle of is too great to describe, but there is no power or ability but through Allaah.

Finally, convey my salaam to the entire household, young and old, and the rest of neighbours, friends and relatives one by one.

Wasalamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakatuh!

Praise be to Allaah, and may His Blessings and Peace be upon Muhammad, his family and companions.

رسالة شيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية إلى والدته: يعتذر فيها عن إقامته بمصر، لأنه يرى ذلك أمرا ضروريا لتعليم الناس

قال رحمه الله:

برسم تيمية إلى الوالدة السعيدة، أقر الله عينها بنعمه وأسبغ عليها جزيل كرمه، وجعلها من خيار إمائه وخدمه. سلام عليكم، ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد:

فإنا نحمد اليكم الله الذي لا إله إلا هو، وهو للحمد أهل ، وهو على كل شيئ قدير ونسأله أن يصلي على خاتم النبيين، وإمام المتقين محمد عبده ورسوله صلى الله عليه وعلى اله وسلم تسليما.

كتابي اليكم عن نعم من الله عظيمة، ومنن كريمة وآلاء جسيمة، نشكر الله عليها، ونسأله المزيد من فضله ، ونعم الله كلما جاءت في نمو وازدياد، وأياديه جلت عن التعداد .

وتعلمون أن مقامنا الساعة في هذه البلاد إنما هو لأمور ضرورية، متى أهملناها فسد علينا أمر الدين والدنيا، ولسنا والله مختارين للبعد عنكم، ولو حملتنا الطيور لسرنا إليكم، ولكن الغائب عذره معه وأنتم لو اطلعتم على باطن الأمور فإنكم-و لله الحمد-ما تختارون الساعة إلا ذلك، ولم نعزم على الإقامة والاستيطان شهرا واحدا، بل كل يوم نستخير الله لنا ولكم وادعوا لنا بالخيرة. فنسأل الله العظيم أن يخير لنا ولكم وللمسلمين ما فيه الخيرة في خير وعافية.

ومع هذا فقد فتح الله من أبواب الخير والرحمة والهداية والبركة، ما لم يكن يخطر بالبال ولا يدور في الخيال. ونحن في كل وقت مهمومون بالسفر، مستخيرون الله سبحانه وتعالى،فلا يظن الظان أنا نؤثر على قربكم شيئا من أمور الدنيا ، بل ولا نؤثر من أمور الدين ما يكون قربكم أرجح منه، ولكن ثم أمور كبار نخاف الضرر الخاص والعام من إهمالها ، والشاهد يرى مالا يرى الغائب.

[16] Shaykh Hamed al-Faqi commented of this hadeeth by saying that it was related by at-Tirmithee and he called it *hasan ghareeb;* and it was also narrated by Ahmad, Aboo Ya'laa and al-Haakim who said of it: *Saheeh al-lsnad. (al-'Uqood ud-Durreeyah, p257)*

والمطلوب كثرة الدعاء بالخيرة، فإن الله يعلم ولا نعلم، ويقدر ولا نقدر، وهو علام الغيوب. قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: (من سعادة ابن آدم استخارته الله ورضاه بما يقسم الله له، ومن شقاوة ابن آدم تركه استخارة الله، وسخطه بما يقسم له).

والتاجر يكون مسافرا فيخاف ضياع ماله، فيحتاج أن يقيم حتى يستوفيه، وما نحن فيه أمر يجل عن الوصف، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، كثيرا كثيرا، وعلى سائر من في البيت من الكبار والصغار، وسائر الجيران والأهل و الأصحاب واحدا، واحدا،

والحمد لله رب العالمين، وصلى الله على محمد واله وصحبه وسلم تسليما.

Letter TwoThis is the first of two letters especially written for the benefit of his students and brothers in Damascus.

It is apparent that this letter was sent after the first release from gail where lbn Taymeeyah was imprisoned for 18 months from the beginning of 705 AH. Upon his release, the Deputy Sultan asked the Shaykh to stay in Cairo which he did, proclaiming the Da'wa and contacting people. Also apparent in this letter, is his forgiveness towards his opponents, asking his brothers not to harm them because of him. These are the manners of the intelligent and chivalrous scholar. He said after praising Allaab and conveying blessings upon the Prophet (salallaahu alayhi wa salam):

In the name of Allaah, Most Merciful, Dispenser of Mercy

Truly Allaah, the most worthy of praise, Has bestowed upon me great rewards and immense merits that oblige me to thank Him, and be steadfast upon His worship, and be patient at all times in fulfilling the obligations. Patience is an obligation in itself, commanded by Allaah in times of ease more than at times of unease. Allaah says:

"Thus it is, if We let man taste some of our grace, and then take it away from him - behold, he abandons all hope, forgetting all gratitude (for our past favours). And thus it is if we let him taste ease and plenty after hardship had visited him, he is sure to say: "Gone is all affliction from me" - for, behold, he is given to vain exultation, and glories only in himself. [And thus it is with most men] save those who are patient in adversity and do righteous deeds: it is they whom forgiveness of sins awaits, and a great reward." [Al Qur'aan 11:9-11]

My brothers, you know that Allaah, the Exalted in Might, had favoured me in this matter [17], with favours He usually reserves for the assistance of His soldiers in order to elevate His Word, aid His religion, strengthen Ahlul-sunnah wal Jama'ah, and humiliate the people of innovation and deviation [18]. The guidance of the Sunnah was proclaimed conclusively with proofs. This lead to the truth prevailing to so many people, and their returning to the way of Ahlus-sunnah wal Jama'ah. You should know that one of the great principles of this religion is the bringing of Muslims' hearts together and unifying their call. Allaah the Glorified says:

"Remain conscious of Allaah, and keep alive the bonds of brotherhood among yourselves." [Al Qur'aan 8:1]

"And hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allaah, and do not draw apart from one another." [Al Qur'aan 3:103]

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17 Referring to his trial and subsequent imprisonment in Egypt. In it, a virtuous quality became known, even though it was through the work of the envious. So, although he was tried and punished, a great benefit shone through the bars of his prison, and his Da'wa became known in that place as never before.

18 Ibn Taymeeah referred to them as Ahlu-Bid'a wal-Firqa.

"And be not like those who have drawn apart from one another and have taken to conflicting views after all evidence of the truth has come to them." [Al Qur'aan 5:105]

Similarly, one of the fundamental themes of the Sunnah is obedience to the Messenger (salallaahu alayhi wa salam). Therefore the Prophet (salallaahu alayhi wa salam) said in the authentic hadeeth related by Muslim on the authority of Aboo Hurayrah:

"Allaah is pleased with you on three occasions. (Firstly) when you worship Him and do not associate any partners with Him. (Secondly) when you hold fast, all together to the bond of Allaah and do not draw apart and, (thirdly) when you advise the good rulers whom Allaah had placed in charge of your affairs."

Furthermore, in the hadeeth of Zayd bin Thaabit and Ibn Mas'ood, who were both among the scholars from the companions that the Messenger of Allaah said:

"May Allaah brighten the face of a man who hears me and then relays to another who has not. It impossible that a carrier of knowledge is not himself knowledgeable, or that the carrier of knowledge will deliver it to someone more knowledgeable. Three things purify the heart of a Muslim. The sincerity in working for the sake of Allaah, taking-up the task of advising the rulers, and not departing from tbe group of Muslims."

In order to implement this principle on a personal note, I say that it is not my wish for any Muslim to be harmed because of me overtly or covertly. This applies to all Muslims, but more specifically to our companions and acquaintances. Neither do I want any of them to be blamed or condemned, as they are still worthy of honour and respect. Indeed, man does not escape being classified into one of three categories: a correct mutjtahid, a wrong one, and a sinner. The first is rewarded and praised, the second is rewarded yet forgiven for his blunder. Regarding the third, I ask Allaah to forgive him, us and the rest of the Muslims. [19]

Therefore, we shall turn a new leaf on those who had erred and not fulfilled this aforementioned principle [20]. Yet I know of some who say "this man erred" and "this man did not do what he should have", or "the Shaykh was harmed because of this man."

Those words that have harmed some brothers I do not condone, nor do I pardon those who utter them.

You should also know that we are all joining to assist one another. It is obligatory upon us to aid each other, more so now than before. So whomsoever thinks that harming some brothers as a result of the hardship experienced in Damascus and Egypt, then he is wrong. It is true that a believer to a believer is like the two hands, one cleans the other. And it is also true that some

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[19] There is nothing beyond this forgiveness, and it can onlyc ome from a scholar who has undoubtedly inherited the tradition of the Prophets.

[20] He is probably referring to some of his brothers and companions in Damascus who grew weak during his trial, and who did not continue on the methodology of their Shaykh. He is barring his companions from harming them, and at the same time excuses them showing that he has no ill feelings towards them in his heart. Instead he values them and loves them for the Sake of Allaah.

kinds of dirt can only be washed by hard scrubbing, yet this treatment will be justified when the outcome appears to the restoration of that botherly love. Let no one think that the believer can be economical with helping their brothers, and in aiding them. If some of our companions had neglected us before, they came to us, their status will rise higher than before. You might also know - may Allaah be pleased with you - that issues like this one often occur due to a difference of opinion and variations that might even befall the people of eemaan due to the whispers of shaytaan. Allaah says:

"Yet man took it [the trust] up - for, verily, he has always been prone to the most wicked, most foolish. [And so it is] that Allaah imposes suffering on the hypocrites, both men and women, as well as on the men and women who ascribe divinity to anything besides Him. And [so too, it is] that Allaah turns in His Mercy unto the believing men and believing women: for Allaah is indeed much forgiving, a dispenser of grace." [Al Qur'aan 33:72-73]

Even the excesses that took place in this issue [21], including the misconceptions, both desires and also the lies and fabrications, were all a bonus and benefit as Allaah says:

"Verily, numerous among you are those who would falsely accuse others of unchastity: [but, O you who are thus wronged,] deem it not a bad thing for you. No, it is good for you. [As for the slanderers,] to every one of them [will be accounted] all that he has earned by [thus] sinning; and awesome suffering awaits any of them who takes it upon himself to enhance this [sin]." [Al Qur'aan 24:11]

Those who erred towards me, I pardon. As for those who abused the rights of Allaah, then let them repent and Allaah will forgive them. If they do not, then Allaah's Rule should be imposed upon them. For if the human were to be thanked for his errors, I would have thanked everyone responsible in this matter for the subsequent benefits in this life and in the next [22]. But Allaah is the most worthy of praise, and the believer seeks the good in all of His decrees. Similarly, those with good intention are thanked for that, and those who do good are praised for their work. But to those who perform bad deeds, we ask Allaah to forgive them. And this is what you are accustomed to of my manners, and what I know of this matter and I what I have experienced is great and more grave than what you perceive.

Nevertheless, the rights of people to one another, and the rights of Allaah upon them, are all under His Rule, and He will be the eventual arbiter.

Let us not forget the incident involving the Sideeq (truthful one) Aboo Bakr during the trial of *Ifk* [23] about which some verses of the Qur'aan were revealed. In it, Aboo Bakr promised that he

[21] The issue refers to his being falsely accused in the subject of 'aqeedah, and the envious shaykhs ill treatment towards him, and his subsequent imprisonment as a result, although his opinion was correct.

[22] He is referring to his exposing innovation and the many lessons he taught in masjids and Schools.

[23] *Al-Ifk* here denotes a false accusation of unchastity. It refers to an incident, which occurred on the Prophet's return from the campaign against the tribe of Mustaliq in the year 5AH. The Prophet's wife 'Aaishah, who had accompanied him on that expedition, was inadvertently left behind when the Muslims struck camp. After spending several hours alone, she was found by one of the Prophet's companions, who led her to the next halting-place of the army. This incident gave rise to malicious

would no longer assist the companion Mistah ibn Athathah. The reason behind Aboo Bakr's decision to exclude Mistah from the many Muslims he helped on a regular basis, was based on the latter's involvement in the spreading of lies. So Allaah revealed:

"Hence, [even if they have been wronged by slander,] let not those of you who have been graced with [Allaah's] favour and ease become remiss in helping [the erring ones among] their near of kin, and the needy, and those who have forsaken the domains of evil for the sake of Allaah, but let them pardon and forbear. [For] do you not desire that Allaah should forgive your sins, seeing that Allaah is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace." [Al Qur'aan 24:22]

The reaction of Aboo Bakr when this verse was revealed was, "Of course! By Allaah, I wish for Him to forgive me." Aboo Bakr, the father of the wrongly accused promptly returned to helping Mistah.

"Allaah will in time, bring forth people whom He loves and who live Him - humble towards the believers, proud towards the disbelievers. They strive hard in Allaah's cause and do not fear to be blamed by anyone who might blame them: such is Allaah's favour, which He grants unto whom He wills. And Allaah is infinite, All-Knowing. Behold, your only helper shall be Allaah, and His Messenger, and the believers - those that are constant in prayer, pay Zakat and bow down before Allaah. For, all those who ally themselves with Allaah and His Messenger and those who believed - behold, it is they, the partisans of Allaah who shall be victorious." [Al Qur'aan 5:54-56]

Wasalaamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullaah!

And praise be to Allaah, the Lord of the worlds, and may His Blessings and Peace be upon our leader Muhammad.

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insinuations of misconduct on the part of 'Aaishah, daughter of Aboo Bakr. These rumours were short-lived and her innocence was established beyond all doubt in the Qur'aan 24:11-20.

The letter of Shaykh ul Islam from his prison in Alexandria to his companions

urging them to turn to Allah and be attentive to Him.

In the Name of Allah, ar-Rahman, ar-Raheem

"And of your Sustainer's blessings shall you always speak" (93:5)

I would like to inform my companions, may Allah please and favour them in this life and the next, that I am in a state of bliss the like of which I have never seen or experienced before. Allah has indeed opened wide for me the gates of His endless bounties. These blessings from Allah will only be tasted by those who have acquired insight into the realities of eemaan and tawheed and were granted a share in what all people endeavour towards: knowledge and faith. The subsequent pleasure and happiness, total joy and excitement, that are difficult to describe, are all found in and are a manifestation of, the higher spiritual wisdom and knowledge of Allah the Exalted in Might, believing in Him and worshipping Him Alone in the true way.

One Shaykh used to say, "I experience a state where I think to myself: Lucky are the people of Paradise if they are in this state!" Another says, "There are times when my heart dances with joy due to the blessing of knowledge and belief, since there is not one blessing in this life equal to that of the Hereafter's, apart from those." In the same vein, the Prophet (saw) used to say to Bilaal:*"Comfort us by prayer, O Bilaal*".

The Prophet had never asked to be comforted from prayer, as the sluggish might say. As Allah says in His book:

"And seek help in patience and prayer, and truly it is heavy and hard except for the Khaashi'oon[24]". (2:45)

Attentiveness is the total surrender to Allah. It is the inner peace derived from the confidence in Allah in heart and limb. The Prophet used to say: "It has become beloved to me from this life of yours, women and beautiful scent".

Until he said,

"And my total peace and ultimate delight are from prayer."

The Messenger of Allah did not just pronounce the first sentence of the hadith. Some people today pronounce the first sentence and stop, although it was not the way that Imam Ahmad and Nasa'i had related it. Those Imaams explain the joy of attentive prayer and the subsequent satisfaction, to be more significant than the other things mentioned.

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[24] Khaashi'oon means those who are attentive and humble in spirit and fear Allah's punishment much.

It is the heart where the whispers of the inner-self dwell. The Shaytan commands the following of desires, and makes them seem attractive. He whispers doubts and thereby turns life into a miserable existence. He who loves any other besides Allah is tormented in this life and the next. If that person attains his urges, he will then be punished for it. However, if he does not, he will be distressed and saddened.

There is no complete happiness and total delight but in the love of Allah and in practising the acts instructed by Him. This love is attained through the rejection of all others, and this is the reality of Laa ilaaha ill-Allah. It was the reality of Ibrahim 'alayhis salaam, and the rest of the Prophets and Messengers, may the peace of Allah be upon them all. The Prophet Muhammad (saw) used to say to his companions.

"Say that we are on the fitrah of Islam, the word of sincerity, the religion of our Prophet Muhammad and the way of our father Ibrahim, who was a true believer and never a mushrik."

Yet man is wicked and ignorant, as His Creator, Allah said:

"**Verily we did offer the trust to the Heavens and the earth, and the mountains but they refused to hear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up - for verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish".** (33:72)

So the objective of those loyal to Allah, His successful party and victorious soldiers, is repentance. And due to this, this religion is a mixture of affirming Allah's true Oneness AND seeking His forgiveness.

"Your God is One therefore, take the straight path unto Him and seek forgiveness of Him" (41:6)

And so, the achievement of all the commands and abandonment of all the forbidden acts are a part of the tawheed of Laa ilaaha ill-Allah. When the willing servant of Allah is blessed with tawheed, and he has absolute confidence and conviction, then Allah will bless him with safety, happiness, joy and mercy. Alternatively, the fear that dwells in the heart is ash-shirk as Allah says: Into the heart of those who are bent on denying the truth,

"**We shall cast dread in return for their shirk**". (3:151)

Similarly in an authentic hadith, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

"Grief unto the servant of dinaar and grief unto the servant of dirham (monetary units). Grief unto the servant of ostentatious clothes, and grief unto the servant of beautified cloth. May grief and distress be on him, and if he was to feel pain, may he never be relieved".

When the Prophet of Allah, Ibrahim, was threatened with the idols of his people, he replied:

"And why should I fear anything that you worship which you set up beside Allah, seeing that you are not afraid of ascribing divinity to others beside Allah, for which, He has revealed unto you no warrant? [Tell me] Which of the two parties has a better right to be secure? [Answer me that] if you have knowledge!" (6:81)

Therefore, Imam Ahmad said to one man, "If your belief is correct, you should fear no one". Furthermore every act that the Muslim does in accordance with the Prophet's command has a share in Allah's saying:

"**Grieve not, verily Allah is with us".** (9:40)

We have seen and experienced this godly company many times. It is this company which was foretold of in Qur'an, that will ultimately be victorious, and will exist until the Day of Reckoning. Alternatively, he who rejects what Muhammad (saw), came with will have a share of:

"Verily he that hates you has indeed been cut-off [from all that is good]" (108:3)

Abu Bakr ibn 'Ayash says, "The Ahlus Sunnah live and so does their fine reputation. Whereas the death of the people of innovations ends their mention. This is due to th eir dislike of what Allah had revealed, and so they were cut-off accordingly." Those who proclaim the sunnah of the Prophet (saw) will have a share of Allah's Promise to him:

"And We have raised you high in dignity". (94:4)

In conclusion, what Allah has blessed me with whilst in this place has been enormous, and I am unable to even count His favours upon me here. Yet what pains me is my distance from my "group"[25], for I would love for them to attain the delight and happiness which they strive for. I would also love for them to be more obedient to Allah, and to reach the highest levels through participation in jihaad for His sake.

I aim to tell the group that, Allah's favours upon me are increasing. If I cannot be with them in person and to be of service to them, then I am supplicating to Allah day and night for their well-being; thereby fulfilling part of my duty towards them. What I command every one of them, is to fear Allah and be conscious of Him, to be reliant solely on Him, to be a mujahid in His Way, and for his supplication and all other acts to be in accordance with Allah and His Messenger's commands.

O Allah! Be Merciful to the believers, men and women. Gather their hearts and resolve their differences. Make Muslims victorious over Your and their enemies, and distance them from sin, the apparent and the hidden.

O Allah! Aid Your Religion, Book and faithful servants. O Allah! Punish the disbelievers and hypocrites who desire to obstruct Your Path and change Your Deen.

O Allah! Send Your unswerving might upon the transgressors. O Allah! The Mover of Clouds, the Revealer of the Book, and the Striker of the Confederates! Strike them, pulverise them, shake the earth under them, and

assist us against them.

[25] Meaning the Shaykhs followers and beloved brothers in Damascus

O Allah! Aid us and do not aid others against us. Plan for us and not against us, and help us overcome our oppressors.

O Allah! Make us amongst the thankful, the obedient and those who return to You,

O Allah! Accept our repentance, and cleanse us of our sins. Strengthen our reasoning and correct our tongues, and take out those dreaded diseases from our hearts.

And Praise be to Allah, whose succour of the Sunnah is permanent, and His crushing of the people of innovation is plain and evident. May blessings and peace be upon Muhammad, (saw), his kin and companions (ra).

Letter Seven: The letter of the Imaam of the Muttaqeen, Ibn Taymeeyah to the King of Cyprus

and the religious leaders, princes and priests replying to their enquiries. He explains to them the message of religions that proceeded the final message. He emphasises the difference between the Muslim understanding of it as opposed to the adulterations that took place later.

From Ahmad ibn Taymeeyah to Sarjawaz, the leader of his nation, and his courtiers, religious leaders, bishops, hermits, princes. Peace be upon the followers of guidance.

We praise Allaah, the only God, the Lord of Ibraaheem, and the household of 'Imraan. We ask Him to send His blessings upon His chosen worshippers and His guided prophets. Especially, those prophets who possessed the greatest determination who are the leaders of all creation and the chiefs of all nations. They were the ones whom covenants were taken from: Nooh, Ibraaheem, Moosa, 'Eesaa, and Muhammad (saw) as they were mentioned in Allaah's Book:

"**In matters of faith, He (Allah) has ordained for you that which He enjoined upon Nuh , and into which We gave you (O Muhammad SAW) insight through revelation -- as well as that which we enjoined upon Ibraaheem , Moosa and 'Eesa: steadfastly uphold the truth and do not break up your unity therein**" (42:13)

"**And Lo! We did accept a solemn pledge from all the Prophets - from you [O Muhammad] as well as from Nooh, and Ibraaheem, and 'Eesaa the son of Maryam - for we accepted a most weight, solemn pledge from [all of] them, so that [at the end of time] He might ask those men of truth as to [what response] their truthfulness [had received on earth]. And grievous suffering He has readied for all who deny the truth**." (33:7-8)

We ask Him to direct the peace and blessings towards the Seal of Messengers, their speaker when they return to their Lord and their Imaam when they meet. He is the interceder of the creation on the Day of Reckoning, the Prophet of mercy and courage who embodies all of the splendours of previous prophets. He was the one that 'Eesaa, the servant of Allaah [26], His Spirit and Word that He bestowed upon the truthful, pure and virginal Maryam, daughter of 'Imraan, gave glad tidings of. This was the Messiah of guidance, 'Eesa ibn Maryam, of great honour in this life and the next, characterised by grace and mercy due to what he relieved Banee Israa'eel (those descendents from the household of Prophet Ya'qoob) of Moosa's message, characterised by the magnificence and firmness. Allaah had then sent the final and concluding Messenger (saw) characterised by firmness on the disbelievers and mercy of the believers, whose sharee'ah contained the beauty of all the previous ones. May Allaah bless them all, and bless those that follow them until the Day of Judgement.

Indeed, Allaah created the creations with His Supreme Ability, and shown in them a sign of His Wisdom and Mercy. All this was done so that His Command is obeyed through His worship. The origin of such worship is the higher spiritual wisdom and knowledge of Allaah and love for Him.

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[26] "Dhimmah" refers to the system that applies to all non-Muslims under Islaamic rule

So whom Allaah guides to His straight path is thereby given knowledge of His noble Names and exalted Attributes. The person is then awarded repentance and fear of him, so that he longs for Allaah like the eagles long for their high nests, and to be immersed in His Love the same way a baby loves his mother. Thus is worship: love, fear and hope, and thus is sincerity to Who owns the heavens and earth, the Lord of the firsts and the lasts. It is Allaah, the Creator of the Seen and that which is beyond human perception, and His servants do not ascribe partners unto Him to be revered in the same way, nor do they take (instead of Allaah) a protector, a king, a prophet or a priest. Allaah's worshippers recognise that everyone in the heavens and earth, are mere servants. Allaah knows them all and they will return to Him one by one on the Day of Judgement. Such are the people chosen, guided and strengthened to the truth by Allaah the Most Graceful, for He guides whom He pleases to the Straight Path.

Mankind after the time of Aadam and before that of Nooh, 'alayhis salaam, were on the Tawheed and sincerity that their father Nooh was upon. At a later date, humankind invented shirk and the worship of idols. This innovation was self-made and had no origin in a book of Allaah, or through a prophet of His. Rather, they were doubts that the Shaytaan had instilled in their imagination, relying on corrupt analogies, and deviant conceptions. Some of them thought idols as the talismans of stars and great spirits. Some sculptured them in the likenesses of their previous prophets and pious people. And some made their idols the lowly spirits of jinns and devils.

As most were ignorant followers of their leaders, turning away from the path of guidance, Allaah sent unto them his Prophet Nooh, 'alayhis salaam. Nooh called them to the worship of Allaah alone, rebuking them for the worship of other beings even though they claimed that the idols were worshipped for purposes of intercession only. Nine hundred and fifty years was the length of time that Nooh proclaimed the call until Allaah informed him that none will reach islaam save those already Muslim. Then, Nooh 'alayhis salaam, prayed to Almighty Allaah to drown the disbelievers, and he was answered. Then came the prophets after him, one after the other until the earth was engulfed by the beliefs of the disbeliever in the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allaah, when the tyrants and pharoahs were the chiefs throughout the world. During these terrible times the Imaam of all believers, and the originator of the pure creed and everlasting word Ibraaheem, 'alayhis salaam was sent. Ibraaheem called people to the declaration of God's perfection and denounced their planet and idol worship, saying:

"Unto Him who brought into being the heavens and the earth have I turned my face, having turned away from all that is false; and I am certainly not of those who associate others with Allaah in His divinity". (6:79)

He also said to his people,

"Have you, then, ever considered what is that you have been worshipping, you and those ancient forefathers of yours? Verily, these [false deities] are my enemies [and that none is my helper] save the Sustainer of all the worlds who created me and is the One who guides me, and is the One who gives me to eat and to drink, and when I fall ill, is the one who restores me to health, and who will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life, and who, I hope will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgement" (26:75-82)

Ibraaheem, 'alayhis-salaam, with his followers, have also said to their people,

"Verily, we absolve ourselves from you and of all that you worship instead of Allaah: we deny the truth of whatever you believe; and between us and you there has arisen enmity and hatred, to last until such a time as you come to believe in Allaah alone." (60:4)

And so Allaah made the prophets and messengers from amongst Ibraaheem's descendants and equipped all with signs, and placed some higher than others in status. Allaah granted Moosa the stick that He caused to come to life and devour what the magicians had made through ropes and sticks. Allaah had also split the sea and caused it to harden whilst the water stood divided into twelve paths for the number of the tribes. Moosa, 'alayhis salaam, was shaded with his people, white clouds escorting them, and was provided with manna and quails every morning; and when they became thirsty, Moosa struck the rod with his stick and water gushed out into twelve springs. Allaah had then sent prophets from among the Israelites. Some resurrected the dead and others cure the sick. Some prophets were given command over other creatures, and others were sent with many kinds of miracles. This is all agreed, even by the Jews and Christians, for their books contain many narratives of prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Habakkuk, David and Soloman, and what the book of Kings, and other contain in terms of valid stories.

Yet Banee Israa'eel were a coarse and unrepenting nation. Sometimes they worshipped idols and stones, and other times Allaah. Sometimes they would kill the prophets unjustifiably, and so they were cursed by Daawood, 'alayhis salaam, and the destruction of Jerusalem is common knowledge to all.

In the midst of this, Allaah sent the Messiah, the son of Maryam, together with his mother, as a messenger and a sign to mankind. This miraculous act was a testimony to the ability of Allaah and comprehensiveness of His Command in dividing mankind into four unique categories. Aadam, 'alayhis salaam, was created without a male-female interaction, and his wife created from a part of a male. Then the Messiah, son of Maryam, was created from a female without male intervention and all others from males and females. This servant, the Messiah son of Maryam, was given clear signs whereby he returned the dead back to life, healed the blind and the leper, and called to the worship of Allaah, following the way of his fellow prophets, confirming what came before him, and giving glad tidings of what shall come after.

But Banee Israa'eel disobeyed and became arrogant. This was a direct contrast to 'Eesa's message. This message was noted for its humility, mercy and forgiveness, seen in the characters of early priests and hermits. Later on, 'Eesa and his followers became an issue that divided people into three camps: The first disbelieved and claimed that he was an illegitimate child whose father was Joseph the Carpenter, accusing his mother of fornication. That first group had also claimed that none of the Old Testament was abrogated. At the same time a second group were very excessive in elevating his status until they called him God and the son of God. They claimed that the Lord of the Worlds had descended and sent His son to be crucified for the sin of Aadam, 'alayhis salaam. But how could they allege that Allaah, the One, the Eternal, who begets not, and neither is He begotten, and there is nothing that could be compared to Him, had in fact begotten and taken a son? Without justifying proof by intellect or through their own Biblical evidences, a difference has continued into the areas of trinity and unity. Though there were some perplexing verses in some scriptures, there were many clear-cut ones to sort out any confusion professing the servanthood of 'Eesaa and his supplication to, and the worship of Allaah, alone.

(1) Servitude in Islaam refers to the total submission to Allaah AND absolute love for Him.

The cornerstone of religion is the belief in Allaah and His Messenger, as the final Prophet has said:

"I was ordered to fight the people until they bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allaah and that Muhammad is His Messenger".

He also said:

"Do not over-glorify me as the Christians did to 'Eesaa bin Maryam, for I am but a servant and so therefore describe me as (1) the servant of Allaah and (2) His Messenger."

And as a result of this pillar, the Sabians and Brahmins and those of the same ilk who rejected the prophets are Kuffaar in their affirmations and beliefs, corrupt in their view of prophets. And those instigators of trinity into the heart of monotheism had corrupted their religion in a plain way, known through the fitrah that Allaah had created humans upon and through the books that He had sent.

A general trend is observed among the priests, cardinals and Archbishops whereby their rise to genuine distinction and prominence is accompanied with their gradual disbelief in their own creed. Yet they insist on retaining their privileged positions and continuing their hypocrisy to the rulers and people. This observation is evident in the behaviour of Ibn al-Bouri of Jerusalem and Ibn al-Quf of Damascus. Similarly, many of the distinguished members of the clergy have been approached and advised by some (Muslim) noble people, who made it clear that their beliefs were not firmly held, if present at all, and that their retention of position is due to custom and privilege and not by right. A similar tradition is applicable to the kings and the wealthy. It is also observed that the efforts of theologian scholars are not directly concerned with the religion of the Messiah. Instead, logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine are commonly found. And if a religious discipline is studied, then the theological rhetoric of the Sabians is used. This last feature is the exact disbelief that Allaah had sent Ibraaheem to counter through conveying the authentic message. And this message is the one ignored by current clergy who substitute it with the rites approved by whims of the public and the desires of the rulers.

This aforementioned clergy had ever contradicted the Jews in their adherence to the Scriptures, although they claimed to follow its entirety save what 'Eesaa had abrogated. The Jews belittled the prophets until they killed them, whereas the Christians were so excessive in their admiration as to worship them. The Jews claimed that it does not befit the Almighty to change or abrogate His Word from time to time even if a messenger claims it. Yet the Christians counter-claimed that their religious leaders had the power to change what they see as appopriate, and in doing so prohibit or sanction what they wish. Furthermore, those religious leaders can order the sinner to participate in extra worship and thereby forgive him. The Jews claim that many things have been prohibited upon them, yet the Christians say that everything between the mosquito and elephant is allowed: one eats what he wishes and leaves what he despises. The Jews claim that physical impurities are grave, that it is disallowed to sit or eat with the menstruating women. The Christians say the opposite, and do not enjoin either circumcision or washing (ghusl) and the removal of impurities, even though the disciples were on the sharee'ah of the Torah.

Moreover, the prayer to the east, and the hanging of the cross were not acts enjoined by the Messiah or called for by his disciples. Rather, they were innovated by Emperor Constantine and others. Any true religion whose followers aim is the pleasure of Allaah, has to be commanded by Allaah Himself and delivered by His prophets and messengers. On the other hand, innovations in religious matters all amount to misguidance and idols were only worshipped first through innovation.

In generally the majority of current Christian rites of worship and celebration were never commanded by Allaah nor sent through His Messenger. Yet Christians possess mercy and kindness, which are from Allaah's Deen. This characteristic was not found amongst the Jews who are coarse and aloof. The Jews, nevertheless are intelligent, yet stubborn and arrogant, and the Christians are ignorant of the truth and oblivious to the path of Allaah.

This is not to say that those people of the book never accepted true guidance. Many current and previous groups of scholars embrace Islaam and migrated to the way of Allaah and His Prophet. They had also written about the proofs of Muhammad's (saw) prophethood in other books of Allaah, highlighting thereby areas hitherto ignored. And when the parties differed over the revealed guidance, Allaah sent the Prophet that the Messiah and previous prophets had mentioned. This last prophet was calling to the creed of Ibraaheem and the creed of the Messengers before and those after Ibraaheem. This message was the sole worship of Allaah without partners, the sincere submission to Allaah in all areas of the Deen, purifying the earth from the worship of idols and the religion of minor and major shirk. This occurred as idols were being worshipped in the lands of Sham, the lands of the sons of Israa'eel and of those who proclaim their Christianity. The last Messenger (saw) called all to believe in all of the revealed books of Allaah, i.e. the Torah, the Bible, the Psalms, and the Qur'aan and in His Prophets from Aadam to Muhammad (saw). Allaah says:

"And they say, "Be Jews", or "Christians", and "you shall be guided". Say [to them, O Muhammad]: "Nay, but [ours is] the creed of Ibraaheem, who turned away from all that is false, and was not of those who ascribe divinity to any beside Allaah". Say: "We believe in Allaah and in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that which has been bestowed upon Ibraaheem and Isma'eel and Ishaq and Ya'qoob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed to Moosa and 'Eesaa and that which has been vouchsafed to all the [other] prophets by their Sustainer: we make no distinction between any of them. And it is unto Him that we surrender ourselves [in Islaam]". And if [others] come to believe in the way youbelieve, they will indeed find themselves on the right path; and if they turn away, it is but they who will be deeply in the wrong, and Allaah will suffice you against them, for He alone is All-Hearer the All-Knower". (2:135-7)

Allaah has also commanded this prophet to call the creation to singling Him out with oneness and uniqueness through the establishment of justice. He says:

"**Say [O Muhammad], "O People of the Book, come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but Allaah, and that we shall not associate partners with Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allaah". And if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims".** (3:64)

Almighty Allaah also said, "**And it is not given to mortal man that Allaah should speak unto him unless [it is] by revelation or from behind a veil**". (42:51)

"It is not conceivable that a human being unto whom Allaah had granted revelation, and sound judgement, and prophethood should thereafter have said unto people, "Worship none beside Allaah", but rather [did he exhort them], "Become men of Allaah by spreading knowledge of the divine writ, and by your own deep study [thereof]." And neither did he bid you to take the angels and the prophets for your lords: [for] would he bid you to deny the truth after you have surrendered yourselves unto Allaah" (3:79-80)

Allaah has ordered His last Messenger (saw) to direct his prayer and pilgrimage towards His sacred house built by the father of the prophets and the imaam of the true monotheist believers, Ibraaheem. Allaah had also ordered that the nation of the last messenger be a just one, nor exaggerating the status of the prophets so as to make them equal to their Creator or bestowing on them features solely possessed by Him. Equally this person did not disregard them in a similar way to those who belittled, disobeyed and then harmed them. Instead, the members of this nation respected, aided and believed in the prophets' message. Moreover this nation had obeyed, followed, trusted, loved and extolled the prophets themselves. They had only worshipped Allaah, placing trust and taking refuge in Him alone as sincere and true monotheists.

Muhammad's (saw) nation was also just in their sharee'ah. They proclaim their adherence to Allaah's commandments and prohibitions. They say that Allaah had prohibited the sons of Israa'eel from what He allowed earlier for Israa'eel himself, and He made lawful through the Messiah what was previously prohibited to the sons of Israa'eel. In both analogies Allaah orders and his servants hear and obey. Anyone else, apart from Allaah's prophets and messengers, possess no mandate to change the religion of Allaah, nor power to innovate in the religion what He did not allow. The prophets' mandate is to deliver the message of Allaah. To Him alone belongs the creations and authority. If none is able to create then none should rule but Him.

"Judgement rests with Allaah alone - He has ordained that you should worship none but Him: this is the [one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not". (12:40)

This nation is one the middle way in matters of purity and impurity, in matters of lawful and prohibited, and also in matters of morals. They have neither relied solely on harshness or on tenderness. Instead, they treated the enemies of Allaah with severity and those who rely on Him with mercy, and they speak of the Messiah that which the Lord and the disciples of the Messiah say of him. They neither follow the innovations of those who surpassed the limit of his admiration, nor those who had neglected him completely.

What triggered my desire to write to the Chief of his people and religion, is that came to my knowledge of his esteem, genuine interest in religion, and love for knowledge. It had also come to my attention the impression and praise of the Shaykh Abul-'Abbas al-Maqdisi, for the fine behaviour and enthusiasm of the King and the good manner of his clergy. We are indeed a benevolent people, and wish that Allaah may grant you the best reward of this life and the next. And since one of the greatest worships was the advice to fellow humans, as it was the occupation of the prophets, then there is nothing greater than the advice of men to their duties towards Allaah as the Meeting and Reckoning are absolute certainties. Allaah says:

"Thus [on Judgement Day] We shall most certainly call to account all those unto whom a [divine] message was sent, and We shall most certainly call to account the message bearers". (7:6)

This life is but a lowly pursuit of leadership and wealth and its reality is worthless. This pursuit of leadership will eventually lead one to the fate of the Pharaoh whom Allaah had drowned in the water out of vengeance. Similarly, the blind pursuit of wealth shall lead one on a fate akin to that of Korah. Allaah had caused the earth to engulf him, and that he is being punished in it until the Day of Reckoning as a result of the harm he instigated against the prophet of Allaah, Moosa.

When viewing the commandments of the Messiah, the prophets before him and those after, one sees common themes running throughout. These themes are the insistence on the worship of Allaah, preparation for the Day of Judgement, and distancing oneself from excessive enjoyment of this life. Therefore I saw that there is nothing more urgent or better than to present to the King the call to the worship that pleases Allaah; and, in reminding him about areas of knowledge and religion without indulging in details, as they are those matters which are the branches of the fundamentals. You [referring to the King] know that the religion of Allaah cannot be derived from one's desires or from the tradition of fathers and community. Instead, the wise should exercise his reason regarding what the prophets came with and what the distinguished people had agreed on. Even if that wise human was not able to publicly proclaim his conversion to the correct belief and fine action, he should persevere and Allaah will reward him accordingly.

It was always my habit to write to the leaders whom I felt possessed a genuine desire for knowledge and good work. I have even considered travelling to Cyprus, as I like to treat the ruler in accordance with the degree of his submission to Allaah's commandments.

When the leader of the Tatars, Qazan came with his followers to Damascus, he claimed a false conversion to Islaam. Yet his behaviour and that of his subordinates were a testimony to their abandonment of Allaah's commands. I have met them all in one famous gathering, the news of which became widespread. On that occasion we humiliated him. Amongst his courtiers was the Christian chief of the castle of Sees[27]. This chief was never respected or honoured in the company of Qazan, but rather treated as an ignorant minor. Furthermore, others of the circle of Qazan knew that man's bad intentions and how we tried to commit you deceivingly into a war with the Tatars. Nevertheless, our position had never changed towards the Christians. I have always called for treating them with justice and defending them when attacked.

It is also common knowledge the content of my correspondence with the Tatars and my request for the release of prisoners of war. Yet their rulers agreed to release Muslim prisoners only and retain the Christians prisoners from Jerusalem. I had refused such a reply and insisted on the release of all prisoners of war including Jews and Christians, whom are of the people of our dhimmah [28]. This demand was granted to me, and this is our good work and reward is sought solely from Allaah.

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[27] "Sees" was a city north of Antakia and Tarsoos, ruled by the Christians since the 4th Century AH

[28] "Mubahalah" refers to a concept of trial through prayer

It is common knowledge to all that even those prisoners that we have under our hands are in fact treated justly and mercifully. This was indeed one of the recommendations of the Seal of Prophets during his last days on this earth:

"Take good care of your prayers and those under your domain".

Allaah, the Exalted in Might, said "**And who give food - however great be their own want of it - unto the needy and the orphan and the captive".** (76:8)

The Tatars as I have mentioned, had proclaimed their conversion to this religion, yet we never concur with their hypocrisy or stayed silent when viewing their mistakes. Instead we made it very clear to them our objection to their transgressions and deviations from Islaam, that obliges waging jihaad against them. When the army returned to Egypt and received the news about the immorality and anti-religious activities of this cursed group (Tatar Army), they came out, all these armies of Allaah, and their size was great and whose numbers filled the valleys. This great force that came prepared with eemaan, sincerity and arms, was fortified by the angels through whom Allaah still aids his truthful nation. Their enemies were surpassed, defeated and dazzled. Thus, Allaah had completed His favour and aided His servants and thereby promoted the glory of Islaam, a religion of ascendance, leaving their enemies in disarray and anguish. The Prophet (saw) said,

"Allaah will send this nation at the helm of every century he who will revive its religion".

The King, as I am sure, is well acquainted with the story of the deputation of Najran's Christians who came to Prophet Muhammad (saw). The Prophet invited them to Islaam, and they asked him about the Messiah. They debated with him, and when their arguments were soundly beaten they resorted to slippery ways and deceitful tactics, until the Prophet was commanded to invite them to Mubahalah. [29]:

"And if anyone should argue with you about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come unto you, say: "Come, let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] humbly and ardently, and let us invoke Allaah's curse upon those [of us] who are telling a lie". (3:61)

The deputation consulted among itself reaching an agreement based on their fear of the consequences and saying, "You know fully that he is a Prophet, and none has ever succeeded when taken up a prophet's challenge of a Mubahala", and so they paid the jizyah [30]

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) had sent a letter to Caesar, the king of the Christians from Syria to Constantinople. This king was a noble man and he knew when reading the letter, of the authenticity of Muhammad's (saw) prophethood as prophesied by the Messiah and promised by Ibraaheem to Isma'eel. Caesar then urged his people to honour the Prophet's ambassador and he held the letter, kissed it and put it on his eyes, saying, "If it was not for this kingdom and rule, I would have loved to go to him and wash his feet".

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29 The "jizyah" is the exemption tax non-Muslims pay when living under Islaamic rule

30 These are the names of the three Angels

The Ashamah Negus was another noble Christian king. He had met the migrant believers in Abyssinia and migrated himself to Allaah as a truthful believer, crying at the recitation of Soorah Maryam and saying, "By God, these words and those which were revealed to Moosa are rays of light which have radiated from the same source!" Ashamah Negus had also sent his son, among others of his people, to the Prophet (saw), and was prayed upon by the Prophet when he died.

In the Seerah of the Prophet of Allaah Muhammad (saw), many examples are to be found of his equitable and honourable treatment towards the Christians. Whoever embraced Islaam from amongst them became one of Muhammad's (saw) nation with all subsequent obligations and responsibilities. He indeed is liable to be rewarded twice, one for his faith in 'Eesaa and the other for faith in Muhammad (saw). He who did not believe, on the other hand, was liable to be fought, as Allaah instructed,

"Fight against those who - despite having been vouchsafed revelation - do not believe either in Allaah or the Last Day, and do not consider forbidden that which Allaah and His Messenger have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth [Which, Allaah has enjoined upon them] till they [agree to] pay the jizyah with a willing submission, and feel themselves subdued". (9:29)

I ask you, Oh King! Has the Messiah, 'alayhis salaam, or indeed did the disciples after him, call for the struggle against our nation? How could you then make lawful the spilling of blood, seizure of women and confiscation of land without any justification? Does he not know that we have a great number of protected people of dhimmah resident in our lands, under our authority, protected and safe?

How is it then that our Muslim brothers are treated in a way that is unacceptable to people of religion and honour? I do not, however, accuse the King, his brothers and family directly, as I know of the hospitality and good spirit that Abul-'Abbas was received with and his acknowledgement and praise of it. Yet, are not our Muslim prisoners jaild at his pleasure and under his rule? And have not the commandments of the Messiah and the rest of the prophets prohibited acts of castigation and enjoined acts of good will? Furthermore, how can the treacherous way our prisoners were captured be justified and treachery is forbidden in all religions, sects and wise ways. How can you render lawful for yourselves an act of deceit? Are you not afraid that Muslims will reward you in a similar way, and Allaah will be their helper and guide?

Let me tell the King that the Muslims are already in preparation for Jihaad and strenuous struggle against the Tatars, and they are returning to their Lord and pursuing His Pleasure. Moreover, those princes ruling the coastal outposts who are increasing in number and authority are staunch believers. Let me tell the King that, among the Muslims are many virtuous people whose prayers are not refused and whose requests are not denied and whose anger does Allaah avenge! Indeed, the Tatars are an example of a people who had outraged the Muslims, and although they were great in number, Allaah had placed His Wrath upon them and they were afflicted in numerous ways. Is it then suitable, Oh King, that a people who border Muslims on many frontiers to treat them in this way? A way that is unacceptable by the wise, be it Muslims or not.

I would like to remind the King that those lands occupied on the seashore, and ever Cyprus itself, had been Muslim-held until less than 300 years ago. I would like to also remind that the Prophet of Allaah (saw) had promised that a group of Muslims would be aided until the Day of

Reckoning. Does the King not think that Allaah is able to assist those wrongly and oppressively imprisoned in the King's lands, and that He can avenge them as He has done for others? Or is the King safe from a Muslim reawakening that will return to them what they had lost? We will treat with kindness those who do the same to us, and Allaah shall succour him who is transgressed upon.

Such a renaissance for Muslims is not a difficult matter to reoccur. I am now writing in the noblest manner in order to assist in directing to the truth and the way that is best. If the King has among his advisors wise men whose judgement and sincerity he trust, then he should consult with them on the realities of knowledge and origins of religions. He should not be satisfied being a part of those blind following Christians, who hear not, understand not and they are like the lead animals and even worse.

This endeavour can be achieved by relying upon Allaah and seeking His guidance. The King should say, "O Allaah! Show me truth so plainly and assist me to follow it, and show me falsehood for what it is and guide me to keep away from it, and make the two extremes very distinct as not to follow desire and be misguided". The King should say, "O Allaah! The Lord of Jibra'eel, Mikayeel and Israfeel [31], the Originator of the Heavens and Earth, the All-Knowing of the seen and the unseen, You are the Judge between your servants in their disagreements. Guide me, O Allaah, to the truth with your grace for You guide who You will to the straight path!"

What I wish to convey unto the King, are my hopes for his well-being and benefit in this life and the next. These hopes are two things, one personal and the other general. On a personal note, I wish for him to grasp knowledge and religion, for truth to unveil before his eyes and for doubt to disappear. I wish for him to worship Allaah, according to His Command, for it is better than rule over the whole earth. Indeed, this is what the Messiah was sent with and what his disciples were taught. The second is for his benefit and that of the Muslims in his lands in general. This can be attained through his help to our prisoners and commanding his people to treat them with kindness and aid their release. Truly, the harm incurred on our prisoners will stain his reputation and inflame Muslims. Therefore, helping the release of those prisoners would be a good deed for the King in his own religion, and as the religion of Allaah testifies. Furthermore, it would be a sign of goodwill towards the Muslims, and indeed the Messiah was the greatest caller to this way of behaviour.

It is surprising that the Christians are taking as prisoners a group of people through treachery or not, who did not even fight them. Has not the Messiah proclaimed: Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also? It can then be assumed that the more prisoners held, and the longer that they are held for, the more invoking of Allaah's Wrath is attempted. How can one be silent about the Muslim prisoners in Cyprus, when the majority are weak and poor and have no one to speak on their behalf?

The religion of Islaam commands aid towards the poor and the weak. The King has the ability and an obligation to assist in this regard more than most, especially as the Messiah instructs this in the Bible, calling for an encompassing mercy and general goodwill by all towards all, akin to the work of the sun and the rain.

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[31] The Bible, Matthew 5:39

There have always been amongst the Christians those at an advantage in knowledge and religion. Many of the rulers, the clergy and the general public recognise parts of the truth and aim to follow it. This group know the status of Islaam and its people where many do not, and as a result treat Muslims equitably. Indeed many are the sayings of the prophets and pious regarding the virtue of releasing the imprisoned and freeing the oppressed. In short, the King is bound to see the fruits of his labour in this regard. It is of note how the Christians, leaders and general public, who live in Muslim lands, far outnumber Muslims living in your own country. Yet at the same time, we do not seek our prisoners for our own lack of number, neither is it out of our dire need for them. Rather we seek the reward of Allaah, the Exalted, and His Pleasure on the Day when He shall recompense the truthful and He shall not fail the pious.

It was Abul-'Abas, the carrier of this message who had informed of the good attributes of the King and his brother amongst us, and my message was written after this knowledge. I write to the King, sensing his eagerness for the truth, and his search for knowledge and deen, as I am one of the representatives of the Messiah and the rest of the prophets, advising the rulers and directing them to guidance. Indeed, the nation of Muhammad (saw) is the best nation, raised for mankind, as they want for the whole of creation the best state in this life and the next. This nation enjoins good, forbids evil and calls mankind to Allaah and assists them in the affairs of their life and their hereafter. If any information defiling Muslims or deeming their religion has reached the King, then it is either a lie or a misinterpretation of a condition. In fact, rarely is such information true, that some oppression, sins or vice were viewed within Muslim lands. Yet the fact remains that although every nation will possess some sickness of one type or another, evil when found amongst Muslims, is much less than that found amongst others, and their merit and righteousness is unequalled by any.

The King and most wise men know that the majority of the Christians are non-adherents to the commands of the Messiah, his disciples or even the letters of Paul and other saints. A detailed look will show that what they have of Christianity is but wine-drinking, swine eating, glorifying the cross and other innovated rites that were never commanded by Allaah. Some even render lawful what the Almighty had forbidden and these are things that cannot be disputed. They dispute over what we have of prophecies. It is of the authentic speech of the truthful and believed messenger of Allaah, Muhammad (saw), that the Messiah, 'Eesaa, the son of Maryam, will descend in our land by the white minaret in Damascus, his hands placed on the shoulders of two angels. He will break the cross, kill swine, impose the jizyah and not accept from any a belief save Islaam. He will kill the anti-Christ, the one-eyed Dajjaal of evil whom the Jews will follow. The Messiah 'Eesaa, the son of Maryam, will then summon the Muslims for war with the Jews until the tree and the stone are made to speak to the Muslim, informing of a Jew's hideout, urging his killing. Allaah will then avenge the Messiah, the son of Maryam, the Messiah of Truth, against the Jews for the harm they inflicted upon him and their rejection of him when he was sent to them.

What is clear is that, all who have done good towards the Muslims and leaned towards them, were never thereafter harmed by them. Indeed the result of such work is good and a lasting relationship repaying the extent of service received. Allaah says

"And so, he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall see it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it". (99:7-8)

I conclude my letter by requesting aid to Shaykh Abul-'Abas and assistance to all of the prisoners. I request that none be harmed or forced to change his belief. When this is achieved, the King shall see the good result of his good act. The King knows of my good intentions towards him, as Allaah the Almighty demands it of us. We, the Muslims, are instructed to seek good for all, show sympathy to all of His creation, and call them to the way of Allaah and His Religion, thereby protecting them from the evils of the devils and humans.

Allaah alone is able to guide the King in his responsible position, and to direct him for what is better for him. All praise is due to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds, and may His Peace and Blessings be upon the messengers and prophets - especially Muhammad the final messenger. Peace be upon them all.

This concludes the series of excerpts from "Letters from Prison". Letters 3, 5 and 6 can be read in the original book.